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# DEATH



# SCHOOL

BULLY PULPIT GAMES PRESENTS A XENOPHOBIA FILMS PRODUCTION DEATH SCHOOL  
DESIGNED BY JASON MORNINGSTAR BASED ON "LADY BLACKBIRD" BY JOHN HARPER  
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# DEATH SCHOOL: THE SITUATION

## INTRODUCTION

It is 1983.

Harvey Point Defense Activity, located on the edge of Ablemarle Sound in eastern North Carolina, is a secret CIA training facility. Clandestine Service agents are trained there in advanced techniques related to their duties - improvised munitions, explosive ordnance disposal, controlled demolition, infiltration and exfiltration, and a variety of combat-related disciplines.

Because the best and brightest of America's shadow warriors congregate at Harvey Point, it is the perfect location for an audacious attack by America's enemies. The vicious attack on The Point land a crippling blow to the Clandestine Service. In a daring operation masterminded by the Soviets, special operations troops from North Korea, Cuba, Libya, and the Soviet Union will all converge on Harvey Point out of the clear blue sky. Every American intelligence coup will be obliterated and avenged in an instant.

The plan of attack is simple - a disguised C-130 will drop DPRK paratroopers along the western edge of the base, returning to drop cluster mines and sealing off Harvey Point by land. At the same time, a second C-130 will land, disgorging a company of Soviet Spetsnaz troops to seize the airfield. To the east, an elite all-female team of Cuban frogwomen will come ashore and disable all communications. And from the north, a converted landing craft will dock and unload a small army of highly mobile Libyan terrorists. Overwhelming force will carry the day - it will be a lightning strike on America's intelligence apparatus. With total surprise and ruthless communist efficiency, it cannot fail.

But nobody told that to the rag-tag band of trainees who survive the initial onslaught. Eight heroes will fight back - for their lives, for their country, and for revenge!

## CHARACTERS: HERO AND REDSHIRT

When playing with four or fewer players, each will choose Hero and a Redshirt. Redshirts have some cinematic defect and must be killed during the course of the session. The game is ideally suited for four players and a GM.

Suggested pairings, balancing the cerebral with the destructive: Brannock and Gallatin. Lonetree and Martinez. Clapp and Randleman. Zuckerman and Von Mackensen. Change this up if you prefer. If you have more than four players, let additional players sort out the pool of Redshirts among themselves. Hero players just play their Hero in this case, and still accumulate all the XP.

## THE SPOTLIGHT

Each character has a Spotlight. This is a moment when they get to be extra-cool and the center of attention. When a player recognizes a good Spotlight for their character, they take over narrative control from the GM, describe how things go down, and then cross off the Spotlight. There are no practical limits to what can happen during a Spotlight moment, but the event should stay focused on a discrete problem and its resolution. The Spotlight is a powerful tool, so the GM is encouraged to make Death School extra tough! Part of your job is to create impossible dilemmas for your players to solve using Spotlights.

## PLOT OBJECTIVES

Heroes each have four Plot Objectives. When a Plot Objective is reached, the player crosses it off and gains a free die during the current conflict or the next conflict to arise. As with Spotlights, this is a potent tool!

## FREE TAGS

Heroes also have a free tag - a tag that can be used with any Trait. This transforms once the Spotlight has occurred. So at the start of the game, Tom Brannock's player can always narrate in Handsome, no matter what the circumstances or Trait. Once Brannock has overcome an insurmountable obstacle with his American can-do attitude, his free tag becomes Destroyer.

## REDSHIRT KEYS

Each Redshirt has a Key. XP for hitting that key accumulates for the player's Hero! Redshirts are flawed and must die - they have no use for XP. In a game with lots of players, make sure each Redshirt's XP is tied to a different Hero. And make sure they get killed, because nothing is more inspiring for a hero than watching a treasured Redshirt eat a communist bullet.

# DEATH SCHOOL: THE GM

## THINGS THAT MAY HAPPEN

### Part One: WELCOME TO HARVEY POINT

- \* "This is like spy vacation, but you get to blow stuff up!"
- \* Two strong personalities butt heads!
- \* Eerie foreshadowing of things to come!
- \* Something crucial is broken beyond repair!

### Part Two: INVASION (NORTH KOREAN PARATROOPERS)

- \* Ninja assassins from the sky!
- \* "He's going to die if we don't move now!"
- \* A moment of indecision - then disaster!
- \* He's walked into a booby trap!

### Part Three: DESPERATE TIMES (CUBAN FROGWOMEN)

- \* Sexy neoprene black widows!
- \* "We trusted him, and he was thinking with his dick!"
- \* The CIA's own defensive systems - working against us!
- \* Choked to death!

### Part Four: PAYBACK (LIBYAN TERRORISTS)

- \* Dune buggies and rocket-propelled grenades!
- \* A prisoner of the Mujahadeen!
- \* "If we don't surrender they'll mow down innocent hostages!"
- \* It's a brick wall - you lack the skill, the knowledge, the expertise to overcome this!

### Part Five: HARVEY POINT SHOWDOWN (RUSSIAN SPETSNAZ)

- \* Soviet supersoldiers with blade-shooting explosive knives!
- \* It's over. You lack the courage, the fortitude, the tenacity to see this through!
- \* Betrayed by the one guy we thought we could trust!
- \* "Let's settle this like gentlemen - just you and me!"

## LISTEN, QUESTION, DON'T PLAN

When you're the GM, don't try to plan what will happen. Instead, ask questions—lots and lots and make them pointed toward the things you're interested in.

Ask questions like:

- \* "Does anything break when you do this crazy maneuver?"
- \* "The fire probably spreads out of control doesn't it?"
- \* "That sounds like a bold plan. What's the first step?"
- \* "Do the two of you end up somewhere quiet together? Does something happen between you?"

Keep that going at a steady pace and the game flies along pretty well. Part of the job of the GM is listening to what the players say, catching it, turning it around and looking at it, and seeing if there's anything else to be done with it.

The GM's jobs: listen and reincorporate, play the NPCs with gusto, create interesting obstacles, and impose conditions as events warrant (especially when rolls fail).

## SAY YES, LOOK FOR OBSTACLES

By default, characters can accomplish anything covered by their traits. It's no fun to ask for a roll when there's no cool obstacle in the way. Just say yes to the action, listen, and ask questions as usual. But also, be on the look out for the opportunity to create obstacles as the action develops.

## CONDITIONS

A condition constrains what the player should say about their character. It's a cue to tell the GM and players to pay attention to that thing and use it as material for the developing fiction. Conditions can be obstacles!

# DEATH SCHOOL: RULES SUMMARY

## ROLLING THE DICE

When you try to overcome an obstacle, you roll dice. Start with one die. Add a die if you have a trait that can help you. If that trait has any tags that apply, add another die for each tag. Finally, add any number of dice from your personal pool of dice (your pool starts with 7 dice).

Roll all the dice you've gathered. Each die that shows 4 or higher is a hit. You need hits equal to the difficulty level (usually 3) to pass the obstacle.

Levels: 2 easy-3 difficult-4 challenging-5 extreme

If you pass, discard all the dice you rolled (including any pool dice you used). Don't worry, you can get your pool dice back.

If you don't pass, you don't yet achieve your goal. But, you get to keep the pool dice you rolled and add another die to your pool. The GM will escalate the situation in some way and you might be able to try again.

## CONDITIONS

When events warrant or especially when you fail a roll, the GM may impose a condition on your character: Injured, Dead, Tired, Angry, Lost, Hunted, or Trapped. When you take a condition, mark its box and say how it comes about. [Note: The "dead" condition just means "presumed dead" unless you say otherwise.]

## HELPING

If your character is in a position to help another character, you can give them a die from your pool. Say what your character does to help. If the roll fails, you get your pool die back. If it succeeds, your die is lost.

## KEYS

When you hit a Key, you can do one of two things:

- \* Take an experience point (XP)
- \* Add a die to your pool (up to a max of 10)

If you go into danger because of your key, you get 2 XP or 2 pool dice (or 1 XP and 1 pool die). When you have accumulated 5 XP, you earn an advance. You can spend an advance on one of the following:

- \* Add a new Trait (based on something you learned during play or on some past experience that has come to light)
- \* Add a tag to an existing trait
- \* Add a new Key (you can never have the same key twice)
- \* Learn a Secret (if you have the means to)

You can hold on to advances if you want, and spend them at any time, even in the middle of a battle!

Each key also has a buyoff. If the buyoff condition occurs, you have the option of removing the Key and earning two advances.

## REFRESH

You can refresh your pool back to 7 dice by having a refreshment scene with another character. You may also remove a condition or regain the use of a Secret, depending on the details of the scene. A refreshment scene is a good time to ask questions (in character) so the other player can show off aspects of his or her PC—"Why did you choose this life?"—"What do you think of the Lady?"—"Why did you take this job?" etc. Refreshment scenes can be flashbacks, too.

<b>DEATH SCHOOL: HERO</b>		<b>XP</b>
<b>AGENT NAME</b> TOM BRANNOCK		<b>COMMENTS</b> Decorated ex-SEAL and all-around patriot.
<b>SPOTLIGHT</b> [ ] When the time comes, you can rise from defeat to overcome an impossible obstacle with your American can-do attitude. YOU NARRATE		
<b>PLOT OBJECTIVES</b> [ ] Jump through a plate glass window. [ ] "No, we go back. No one gets left behind." [ ] Have an intimate scene about your secret pain. +1 DIE [ ] Start to lose a fight, rally, let rage kick in, win.		
<b>TRAITS</b> FREE TAG *Handsome* transforms into *Destroyer* after Spotlight.		
NAVY SEAL Battle-Hardened, Light 'Em Up, Huge Explosion, Sidearm, Assault Rifle, Smackdown, Rack the Slide, Collateral Damage, Covering Fire, [One Shot One Kill], [Hail Of Lead]		
HEARTS & MINDS Deception, Sneak, Swim, Climb, Find A Weakness, Pilot, Languages, Ninjutsu, [Camouflage], [Bird Calls]		
PATRIOTISM Corn-Fed, Raw Determination, Overconfidence, American Way, Stirring Speech, [The Grace of God], [Cigar]		
<b>KEYS</b> OLD GLORY Hit your key whenever you defend an American flag or plant one in a dangerous, inspiring, or important place. Buyoff: Disrespect or abandon an American flag. +1 XP		
<b>COMMAND</b> You are accustomed to giving orders and having them obeyed. Hit your key when you come up with a plan and give orders to make it happen. Buyoff: Acknowledge someone else as the leader.		
<b>SECRET</b> BEING TOM BRANNOCK [ ] Once per session, give someone a chance to re-roll a failure by giving them orders, advice, or setting a good example.		
<b>CONDITIONS</b> [ ] Hurt [ ] Dead [ ] In Love [ ] Angry [ ] Lost [ ] Hunted [ ] Trapped		

<b>DEATH SCHOOL: HERO</b>		<b>XP</b>
<b>AGENT NAME</b>	SAMANTHA LONETREE	<b>COMMENTS</b> Green agent fresh from the classroom.
<b>SPOTLIGHT</b> YOU NARRATE	[ ] When the time comes, you can rise above the locker room and accomplish the thing all the boys tried and gave up as impossible.	
<b>PLOT OBJECTIVES</b> +1 DIE	[ ] Outrun an explosion. [ ] "We've got company." [ ] Have an intimate scene where you bond with a Redshirt. [ ] Use a "useless" skill in a surprising new way.	
<b>TRAITS</b>	FREE TAG	*Hair Up* transforms into *Hair Down* after Spotlight.
	<b>AGENCY CLASSROOM</b>	Terrorism, Applied Cartography, Acting, Observation, Social Engineering, Policy, Languages, Cultural Study, Psych 101, Disguise, [Anthropology], [Field Intelligence]
	<b>FIELD HOCKEY</b>	Hitting Things With a Stick, Running, Dodging, Offense, Defense, Coordination, Smack Talk, [Breaking Teeth], [Pemberton Double-Fake], [Senior Formal]
	<b>GIRL POWER</b>	Pragmatism, Terror, Women's Intuition, Charm, Heels, Crafty, Distractions, Bluff, [Disguise], [Seduction]
<b>KEYS</b> +1 XP	<b>GUARDIAN</b>	Choose another character and protect them from harm. Hit your key when you make a decision influenced by that character or keep them safe. Buyoff: Let 'em swing.
	<b>GLASS CEILING</b>	Hit your key when the fact that you are a woman significantly impacts your decisions. Buyoff: Behave in an un-ladylike manner. You can kill people and still be ladylike.
<b>SECRET</b>	<b>MAGIC PURSE</b>	No matter how thoroughly you're searched, you always have a few key items with you. You can produce any common, simple item at a moment's notice.
<b>CONDITIONS</b> [ ] Hurt [ ] Dead [ ] In Love [ ] Angry [ ] Lost [ ] Hunted [ ] Trapped		

<b>DEATH SCHOOL: HERO</b>		<b>XP</b>
<b>AGENT NAME</b> CHRIS CLAPP		<b>COMMENTS</b> Agency librarian with a complicated past.
<b>SPOTLIGHT</b> [ ] When the time comes, you can come up with an academic or historical solution to a unique problem that saves the day. <b>YOU NARRATE</b>		
<b>PLOT OBJECTIVES</b> [ ] Make a bad pun after a particularly gruesome killing. [ ] "I read about this once." [ ] Have an intimate scene where the real you comes out. <b>+1 DIE</b> [ ] Have an argument or conversation during a firefight.		
<b>TRAITS</b> <b>FREE TAG</b> *Comic Relief* transforms into *Reluctant Hero* after Spotlight.		
	<b>LIBRARY SCIENCE</b>	Books, Hands-On Solution, Historical Precedent, Obscure Skill, Simple Fact, Maps, Shelving Muscles, Documentation, Connecting the Dots, Attention to Detail, [Feign Death], [Jeet Kune Do]
	<b>REFORMED CRIMINAL</b>	Breaking, Entering, Casing the Joint, Theft, Alarms, Sneaking, Climbing, Lockpicking, Hot-Wiring, Scrambling, Hiding, [Curb Stomp], [Tunneling]
	<b>FISH OUT OF WATER</b>	Bush League Mistake, Help From A Friend, Falling, Beginner's Luck, Well-Timed Disaster, Ignorance, Million-To-One, [Perfect Storm], [Wrong Place Right Time]
<b>KEYS</b> <b>HIDDEN LONGING</b> You love Samantha Lonetree, but she can't know. Hit key when you make a decision based on this secret or when you show it indirectly. Buyoff: Give up on your desire or make it public. <b>+1 XP</b>		
	<b>BANTER</b>	Hit your key when you say something that makes the other players laugh or when you explain something using library jargon. Buyoff: Everyone groans at one of your comments.
<b>SECRET</b> <b>LUCKY BREAK</b> [ ] Once per session, you can keep your pool dice when you succeed (so go ahead and use 'em all).		
<b>CONDITIONS</b> [ ] Hurt [ ] Dead [X] In Love [ ] Angry [ ] Lost [ ] Hunted [ ] Trapped		

<b>DEATH SCHOOL: HERO</b>		<b>XP</b>
<b>AGENT NAME</b> LEON ZUCKERMAN		<b>COMMENTS</b> Technical guru-nerd and weirdo
<b>SPOTLIGHT</b> YOU NARRATE	[ ] When the time comes, you can throw together an impossible device or repair something like magic.	
<b>PLOT OBJECTIVES</b> +1 DIE	[ ] Improvise explosives from household chemicals. [ ] "I need to do this ... alone." [ ] Hack an IBM PC-XT and use a spy satellite to pinpoint the enemy. [ ] Uncover the traitor in your own ranks. If it's you, gloat.	
<b>TRAITS</b>	<b>FREE TAG</b>	*Eccentric* transforms into *Mastermind* after Spotlight.
	<b>OBSESSIVE NERD</b>	Self Interest, Native Genius, Absent-Mindedness, Harmless, Comic Book Reference, Strange Productivity, What Would Captain Kirk Do?, Deep Fear of Pain, [Nerdrage], [Two Steps Ahead]
	<b>GREASE MONKEY</b>	Gadgets, Weird Tools, Explosives, Chemistry, Welding, Duct Tape, Mechanism, Unintended Consequences, Timer, Illegal Substance, Repurposed Machine, [I've Got That], [Electricity]
	<b>FORMER FAT KID</b>	Taking A Beating, Running Away, Squeezing Into Small Spaces, Escape, Being Quiet, Setting Traps, Elaborate Ruses, Making Them Laugh, [Surprisingly Quick], [Surprisingly Cruel]
<b>KEYS</b> +1 XP	<b>GEEKERY</b>	You just can't leave it alone. Hit your key when you modify, improve, repair, or patch some tech. Buyoff: Pass up the opportunity to mess around with technology and/or explosives.
	<b>BEING A LOSER</b>	You don't fit in, to put it mildly. Hit your key when your outcast status causes you trouble or is important in a scene. Buyoff: Earn respect or be welcomed into the group.
<b>SECRET</b>	<b>POLYMATH</b>	[ ] Once per session, you can use tags from more than one trait when you make a roll.
<b>CONDITIONS</b> [ ] Hurt [ ] Dead [ ] In Love [ ] Angry [ ] Lost [ ] Hunted [ ] Trapped		

# DEATH SCHOOL: REDSHIRT

ALL XP TO HERO

AGENT NAME RANDY RANDLEMAN

COMMENTS Dangerous loose cannon. Note: You are black and therefore cannot survive.

## SPOTLIGHT

YOU NARRATE

[ ] When the time comes, you can go ape-shit to terrify your enemies and give your friends the time or space they desperately need.

## TRAIT

BADASS

Ruthless, Kiss My Black Ass Fools, Unbelievable Luck, Full Auto, Craaaaazy

## KEY

+1 XP

BEING

UNHINGED

You eat danger for lunch! . Hit key when you do something that is suicidal or just reckless. Buyoff: Be very careful.

## CONDITIONS

[ ] Hurt [X] Black [ ] In Love [X] Angry [ ] Lost [ ] Hunted [ ] Trapped

# DEATH SCHOOL: REDSHIRT

ALL XP TO HERO

AGENT NAME NORM GALLATIN

COMMENTS Veteran field agent. Note: You are old and therefore cannot survive.

## SPOTLIGHT

YOU NARRATE

[ ] When the time comes, you can save someone's life. Be sure to shout "live, damn you!".

## TRAIT

OLD  
SCHOOL

Seen It All, Access Codes, Murder, Intimidation, Creaky

## KEY

+1 XP

TOO OLD FOR  
THIS SHIT

As an old hand, you're a cut above the new fish. Hit key when you demonstrate superiority or when old Agency skills overcome a problem. Buyoff: Admit you've got a thing or two to learn.

## CONDITIONS

[ ] Hurt [X] Old [ ] In Love [ ] Angry [ ] Lost [ ] Hunted [ ] Trapped

# DEATH SCHOOL: REDSHIRT

ALL XP TO HERO

AGENT NAME DIEGO GARCIA

COMMENTS Cuban emigre assassin. Note: You are Latino and therefore cannot survive.

## SPOTLIGHT

YOU NARRATE

When the time comes, you can use your passion as a fiery Latin to strike a telling blow for freedom.

## TRAIT

KILLER

Cunning, Angel of Death, Million-Watt Smile, Bare Hands, You Kill My Family

## KEY

+1 XP

LATIN  
LOVER

Hit your key when you make a sexist comment or when you make a pass. Hit it again if we fade to black on you and a woman. Buyoff: Pass up an opportunity to get laid.

## CONDITIONS

[ ] Hurt [X] Latino [ ] In Love [ ] Angry [ ] Lost [ ] Hunted [ ] Trapped

# DEATH SCHOOL: REDSHIRT

ALL XP TO HERO

AGENT NAME HEDWIG  
VON MACKENSEN

COMMENTS West German lady exchange agent. Note: You are foreign and therefore cannot survive.

## SPOTLIGHT

YOU NARRATE

[ ] When the time comes, you can sacrifice your life to save someone (or everyone) in an inspiring example of Teutonic discipline.

## TRAIT

GERMAN  
AGENT

Dead Shot, Prussian Know-How, Tack-Hammer Precision, Superior to a Man, Superior to a Woman

## KEY

+1 XP

THE WRONG  
SIDE WON

Hit your key whenever you compete with an American for anything. You don't have to win, but you have to try. Buyoff: Let an American steal all the glory.

## CONDITIONS

[ ] Hurt [X] German [ ] In Love [ ] Angry [ ] Lost [ ] Hunted [ ] Trapped

DEATH SCHOOL



HARVEY POINT

# THANKS!

I hope you enjoyed Death School. I certainly enjoyed bringing it to you and if you have comments—particularly if you play it—I would like to talk to you. I can be reached at [jason@bullypulpitgames.com](mailto:jason@bullypulpitgames.com) or @jmstar on Twitter.

None of this was done in a vacuum—there's a whole community of talented, generous, creative people out there making and sharing their work. I borrowed from a few and stole from many, who in turn eagerly did the same.

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